

SIGNS AND AWNINGS

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR SIGNS AND AWNINGS WITHIN THE STREETSCAPE OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICT

WHAT IS A STREETSCAPE

In the City of Franklin, as with all historic districts, the architectural, cultural, and historic significance does not only include its buildings individually, but in the city taken as a whole. The street grid and the scale and relationship of the buildings in the regard to neighboring structures, streets, public spaces, furnishings and landscaping form an important part of the historical texture for which Franklin is noted. Replacement or new features in the city of Franklin streetscape should complement the original features in location, setback, materials and colors compatible with the historical streetscape. Public and private amenities necessary for the modern functioning of Franklin should be designed in a manner appropriate to the historical character of Franklin.

For the purpose of these design guidelines, “streetscape” includes the following features: streets, pedestrian walks and curbs, driveways and offstreet parking, fences, street furniture and lighting, signals and utilities, signage and awnings, and trash enclosures.

WHAT HARB REVIEWS FOR SIGNS AND AWNINGS

When reviewing applications, HARB considers the appropriateness of signs, awnings, mounting and bracket hardware and sign illumination. HARB also considers the sign and/or awning design and installation in relationship to the building and streetscape that are visible from a public way for which it is proposed. What might be appropriate at one location might not be appropriate at another.

The following signs are exempt from HARB review

- (a) Official notices authorized by a court, public body or public safety official.
- (b) Directional, warning, information or community signs authorized by federal, state or municipal officials.
- (c) Memorial plaques, building identification signs and building cornerstones when cut or carved into a masonry surface or when made of noncombustible material and made an integral part of the building or structure.
- (d) The flag of a government or noncommercial institution, such as a school.
- (e) Religious symbols and seasonal decorations within the appropriate public holiday season.
- (f) Works of fine art displayed in conjunction with a commercial enterprise where the enterprise does not receive direct commercial gain.
- (g) Street address signs and combination nameplate and street address signs that contain no advertising copy and which do not exceed six (6) square feet in area.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR APPLICATION FOR A SIGN OR AWNING

To better enable HARB members to review your application for Signs and Awnings, please submit the following with your application;

- Scaled colored renderings or photographs with dimensions of the requested sign or awning.
- A site plan locating free standing signs.
- Photographs of the entire building façade and the adjacent buildings and/or streetscape.
- Photographs or drawings of the sign or awning indicating where it will be positioned on or near building (drawings should be to scale and include dimensions).
- Sign materials or awning fabric samples and methods of attachment.
- Color samples, and lettering styles and sizes.
- Description of lighting to be used, if any.

WHY ARE SIGNS AND AWNINGS IMPORTANT

Signs play an important role in helping to define the visual quality of the Historic District. Public, informational, private and commercial signs are integral elements of the historical streetscape and should be treated with sensitivity. Used appropriately, they can effectively communicate information and enhance the environment in which they are placed. A well designed and well placed sign or awning can make a good impression, attract potential customers and unify a streetscape and at the same time, be in harmony with the Historic District. Used inappropriately, signs can be visually distracting and detract from an otherwise harmonious streetscape. New signs should not detract from the character-defining features of the building or damage elements of the historical building.

WHAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR THE HISTORIC DISTRICT

- Reusing historic signs at original locations where possible. If an historical sign cannot be retained in its original location, consider moving it to a different exterior location (ensuring that the sign and the building are not damaged), or move the sign inside where the public can see it. If an historical sign cannot be retained, consider donating it to a local museum or a local preservation group. Make provisions for the protection of historical signs if the building is undergoing maintenance or restoration.
- Selecting the type of sign to be used based on evidence of historical signs or sign attachment hardware along the building storefront where possible. The design of signs should respect the character of the building and the period of the streetscape in which

they are being placed.

- Coordinating new signs with existing historical signs by using compatible sizes, shapes, colors, lettering, and location.
- Design signage to be in proportion to the facade, respecting the building's size, scale and mass, height.
- Using materials that are consistent with the historical character of the building including wood, bronze, brass, gold leaf, etched glass, paint, aluminum, stainless steel, enameled metal, leaded glass, appliques, tile, terrazzo and synthetic materials that mimic the qualities of any of the materials listed here.
- Mounting individual letters of wood, metal or synthetic materials that mimics wood or metal to a building or signboard.

WHAT IS NOT APPROPRIATE FOR THE HISTORIC DISTRICT

- The use of contemporary materials such as plastics or Plexiglas, or plastic or glossy coatings, which are incompatible with the building's historic character.
- Flashing lights, flashing directional lights, backlit lights, moving LED lights (except for theater marquees) or lighting which shines directly in the faces of pedestrians.
- Lighting which is noticeably too strong, overwhelming building features or flooding light onto the sidewalk exceeding typical brightness levels.
- Oversized letters or numbers or extra-bright signage.

WHAT ARE APPROPRIATE SIGN MATERIALS

Historically, signs were typically made of wood either attached directly to the building or suspended from wrought iron brackets. As technology advanced and building styles changed, a wider range of materials were used. These included bronze plates, cast iron, stainless steel, etched or painted glass, leaded glass, gold leaf, tile and terrazzo. Each material was popular during particular time periods, and may not be appropriate at all building locations.

Some materials might no longer be practical for signage installations due to limited availability or expense. For example, redwood is more durable for exterior installations than other species of wood and is very expensive, and wrought iron is considerably more labor intensive and expensive to manufacture than cast iron.

Available substitutes for wood include Urethane board and MDO board. Both materials can be painted, carved or routed similar to wood, but are not subject to warping and rot in the same manner as wood or plywood. Urethane board is compressed, hardened foam, and is

generally lighter and thicker than MDO board, which is made of several layers of alternatively grained wood material to protect against warping, and has an approximate seven-year life span.

HOW TO DETERMINE PLACEMENT AND INSTALLATION

LOCATION – Place a sign at locations on a building where signs were originally allocated as part of the overall design of a building. Reuse existing attachment hardware where they exist. Do not erect signs above the cornice line or uppermost portion of a façade wall, or where they will disfigure or conceal architectural details, window openings, doors or other significant details.

OBSTRUCTION OF HISTORICAL FEATURES – New signs should avoid obscuring historical building features such as cornices, gables, porches, balconies, or other decorative elements. Signs should not be placed in conflict of important views or within a line of sight of other signs or historical buildings. Signs should be placed within the façade of a building and not extend beyond the top of the building or the building sides.

BE THOUGHTFUL TO THE BUILDING MATERIALS – Avoid irreversible damage caused by installing a sign. For example, mount signs or sign hardware into the mortar joints rather than the historic masonry.

WHAT IS THE BEST SIZE FOR A SIGN

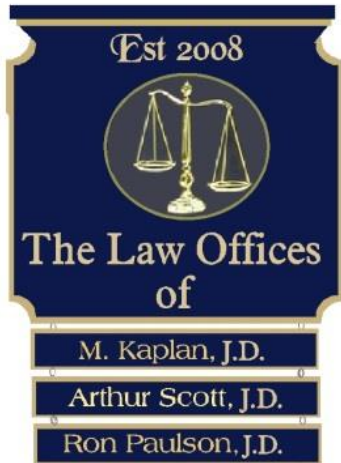
Before considering the size of your sign and how many will be used. Contact the Code Enforcement Officer at City Hall to review the Zoning and Building Codes of the City of Franklin.

- Signage should be compatible to scale of the building, adjacent buildings, the streetscape and adjacent signage. For example, a small scale sign is appropriate to smaller scale building. Signs should be oriented to relate to both pedestrians and passing motorists.
- When several signs are grouped together on a building, small simple easy-to-read signs do not overwhelm the viewer and the building.
- A well designed smaller sign can have more of an impact than larger signs. This is particularly true in Franklin where the means of travel is by foot or slow moving vehicles.

IDENTIFY YOUR TYPE OF SIGN

Generally, there are two types of signs; those that are attached to the building, and those that are freestanding. The choice between attached and freestanding signs may be based upon the specific location, needs and the limitations of the Zoning Ordinance. The following illustrations are intended to provide general examples of sign types that can be found within the historic district.

DIRECTORY SIGNS can be either freestanding or attached at the building. They include information about several businesses attached to a single larger sign, with an identifying building address or name.



DIRECTORY SIGNS FOR PROFESSIONAL OFFICES employ small individual signs that all have matching size panels, colors, letter size, case and styles mounted to a larger sign face.

DIRECTORY SIGNS FOR RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS employing small individual signs with matching size panels and matching colors, with the individual store's letter styles mounted to a larger sign face.

FREESTANDING SIGNS (LANDSCAPE) are not attached to the building. They typically include information on two sides, spanning between two posts that are put in paving or landscape areas. Monument style signs commonly used in suburban areas are not consistent with Historic Districts.

FREESTANDING SIGNS (SUSPENDED) are not attached to the building. They typically include information on two sides, are suspended from a rail or bracket that is supported by one or two posts that are set in paving or landscape areas.

Freestanding signs should be located in areas that will not obscure a building's architectural elements or the site's important features. The mounting hardware of a freestanding sign should complement the design of the sign and not detract or draw attention from it.

Freestanding signs are most appropriate in locations where buildings are set back from the street, such as in areas where historic residences have been adapted for commercial uses.

This



Not This



PARALLEL PROJECTING SIGNS are one sided signs, generally suspended from an architectural element of the building such as the edge of a porch, mounted parallel to the face of the building.



PERPENDICULAR PROJECTING SIGNS are generally two sided signs, suspended from a metal bracket, mounted perpendicular to the face of the building. Projecting signs should be scaled appropriately to the size of the building façade.

This



This attractive sign identifies the restaurant without overwhelming the building

Not This



This sign is too large for the building and is mounted too high

WALL SIGNS are typically mounted parallel and fastened to the wall of a building above the primary entrance. Locate wall signs in the area above the storefront windows and doors and below the second story windows. Mount storefront wall signs to align with adjacent wall signs of neighboring buildings. Avoid using internally illuminated signage.

This



Not This



Internally-illuminated channel letters are inconsistent with Franklin's Historic District.



STOREFRONT WINDOW SIGNS include all signs that are placed directly behind the glass or attached to glass either at the interior or exterior of the building. These signs can be generally painted, vinyl appliques or etched glass, and can include stained glass. Window signs may be used as one element of an overall signage scheme. To avoid creating visual clutter that competes with other building signage, window signs should be simple in design and not cover more than 30% of the window area. Avoid window signs constructed of opaque materials that obscure views into and out of windows, either partially or completely.

This



This sign clearly identifies the business without obscuring the window.

Not This



These window decals overwhelm the viewer and block too much of the window.



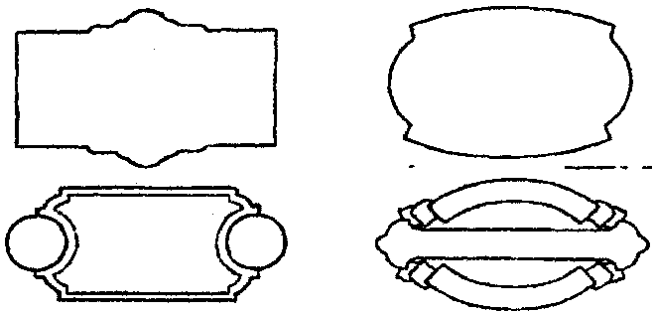
Simple and attractive



Internally illuminated cabinet blocks window view and is ill-suited to the Historic District.

IDENTIFY YOUR SIGN SHAPE

Most sign shapes are simple geometric forms, geometric shapes with decorative edges or rounded corners, or shapes that convey the type of business. When considering which sign shape is most appropriate for a specific location, the applicant should consider the sign type, information to be conveyed, size and location of the sign, building style, and other signs at the property or adjacent properties.



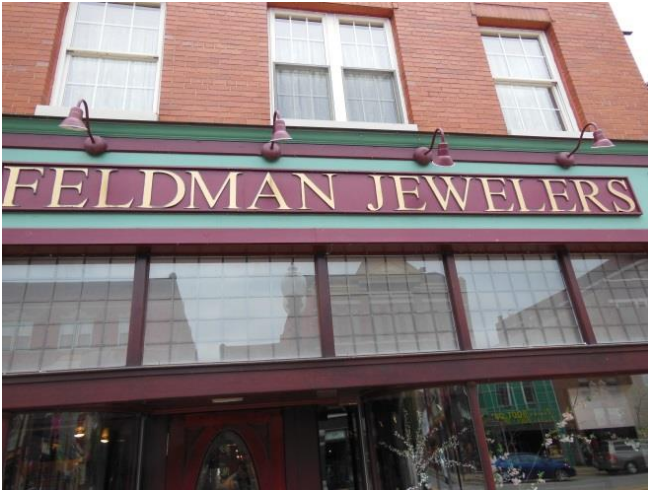
Geometric signs are generally appropriate for small signs or signs that use large amounts of text. Geometric signs can include rectangular, square, round or oval shapes and can be utilized for all sign types. Geometric signs with decorative edges can include scrolled tops and bottoms and are generally appropriate. Ornamental signs are generally more appropriate for hanging, freestanding, or window signs and include a distinctive logo.

SELECT YOUR SIGN ILLUMINATION

- The simplest and easiest lighting is to use the existing ambient streetlight or the existing storefront lighting.
- Use of small indirect or hidden lights such as ‘gooseneck’ or in ground mounted lights directed towards the sign is attractive and often used in Historic Districts.
- Consider your building style and age or perhaps use the same style lighting that is currently in use on the building, providing it is appropriate.
- Using low wattage bulbs to minimize potential glare to other properties, pedestrians and vehicle operators. Avoid too much light causing the sign to appear washed-out.
- Signage with internal illumination is not appropriate for Historic District.
- Neon or neon look-alike signage is not appropriate for most historic buildings, although, in some instances neon signage on Art Deco buildings would be attractive.

Sign Illumination

This



Above: gooseneck lights

Below: ground mounted lights



Not This



Internally illuminated signs diminish the appearance of the historic streetscape.

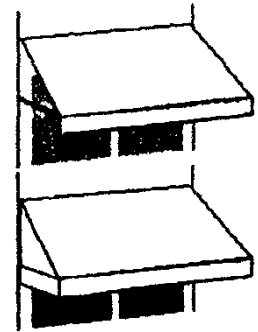


Indirect lighting above letters



AWNINGS ARE A GOOD CHOICE FOR MANY REASONS

Awnings are a historically popular means of sheltering pedestrians, advertising a business, protecting window merchandise from sun damage, provide additional cooling in the summer and creates a charming and nostalgic entrance or storefront. Historically, residential and commercial awnings were triangular sections projecting at a continuous angle away from the face of the building on a metal frame, terminating at a skirt or valance.



**Top: Open sided
awning; Bottom:
Closed sided
awning**

COMMERCIAL AWNINGS

- Consider a single awning over the length of the storefront or individual awnings at the display windows or entrances.
- A solid color or striped canvas awnings look best when coordinated with the existing colors of the building and style of the building.
- When considering awnings, look at the scale of the building and how much shade and shelter is necessary. An oversized awning on a small building would look out of place, and same holds true for small awnings on large buildings.
- Aside from shade and shelter, a straight or scalloped valance on the front edge of an awning with a business name and logo is an opportunity for additional signage.
- Both fixed and retractable awnings are a good choice, when installing awning hardware, always minimizes the damage to historical building materials.
- Select awnings made using fire-resistant canvas or synthetic canvas fabric in a color that is appropriate to the period of the building. The use of contemporary glossy awning materials such as metal, plastics or leatherette is inconsistent with traditional building materials and thus is incompatible with the character of Historic Districts.
- Lights within awnings are best used when illuminating the storefront or sidewalk, lights directed internally within awnings creates an unattractive 'glowing' effect that detracts from the charm of awnings and is inconsistent with historical buildings and streetscapes.
- The use of contemporary rounded balloon awnings or shapes not easily created from canvas conflicts with the historic character of buildings in Franklin. Awnings with lettering and logos on the sloping portion of the awning read too loud and also convey a negative message on historical buildings.

This



Not This



RESIDENTIAL AWNINGS

Awnings at windows or over doors help provide interior climate control by blocking some of the sun's heat while still admitting daylight and fresh air.

- Retain historical awning frames and hardware where they exist.
- Install the awning frame and hardware so historical trim and character-defining features are not destroyed or obscured.
- Use canvas or synthetic canvas fabrics.
- Install awning supports into the mortar joints rather than the masonry materials.

CHOOSING COLORS FOR SIGNS AND AWNINGS

Colors of signs and awnings should relate to the personality of your business and should express a recognizable message and be remembered by the public. Colors should also be compatible within the historic context of the building and streetscape. Bright colors used excessively are incompatible with the historic character of the building and streetscape and tend to overwhelm the viewer. Simple designs with a muted color combination are well suited for historic buildings and streetscapes. The contrast between the logo or lettering and background color can greatly increase the overall legibility of the sign or awning. In many instances limiting the number of colors to those necessary to convey the information also increases the legibility. Earth tones, pastels or neutral colors are good choices for signs and awnings with bright or primary colors generally limited to accent areas.

CHOOSING LETTERING FOR SIGNS AND AWNINGS

Similar to selecting a color, lettering of signs and awnings should relate to the personality of your business and should express a recognizable message and be remembered by the public. When considering a letter style for signs and awnings, applicants must balance the need to make them legible, convey the business identity or logo, *and* complement the historic character of the building and streetscape. Excessive amounts of text or highly stylized typestyles can be confusing and overwhelm a viewer and effectively be illegible. A good rule of thumb to follow is no more than 60% of the sign should be letters and numbers. In addition, letters should always be more prominent than numbers.

Some examples of lettering to consider:

Andalus ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Bank gothic ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

COPPERPLATE GOTHIC ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Monotype Corsiva ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

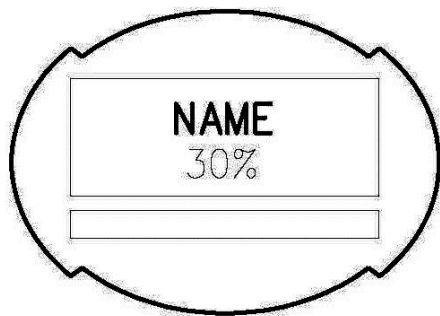
MS PMincho ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Roman ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Swis721 ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

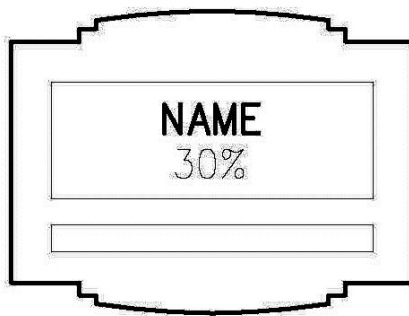
Vineta ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

EXAMPLES OF SIGNS WITH LETTERING PROPORTIONAL TO THE SIGN



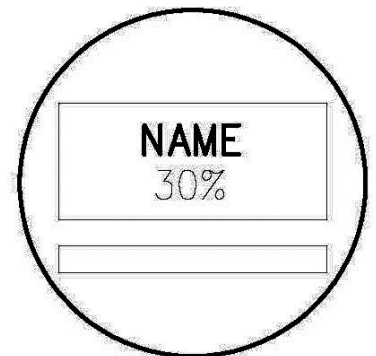
NUMBER
10 %

ADDRESS
10 %



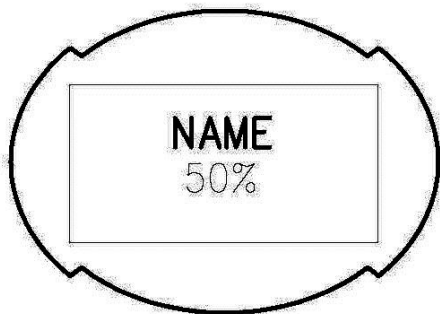
NUMBER
10 %

ADDRESS
10 %

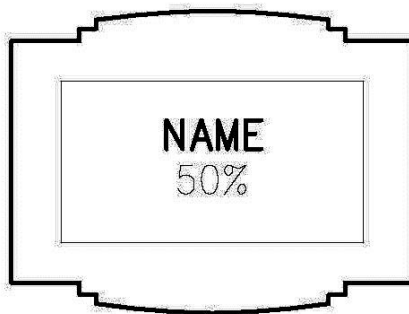


NUMBER
10 %

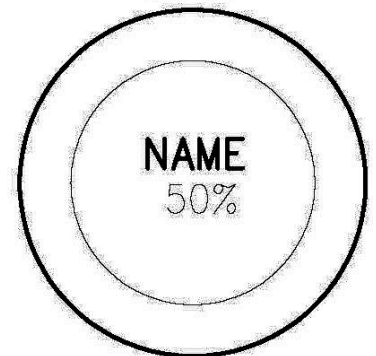
ADDRESS
10 %



NAME
50%



NAME
50%



NAME
50%

SIGN AND AWNING LOGOS

Logos can be an important identifying feature for any business, and generally, applicants are encouraged to utilize a logo or symbol that identifies their business. However, HARB carefully considers and is not obligated to accept a sign or awning logo design that is based upon a national or regional image required by a corporation or franchise that does not make an effort to be consistent with the historical context of the building or streetscape.

Here are some examples of national corporations and franchises that have used their logos on signs that have been designed to be appropriate for historic districts.



References.

U.S. Dept. of the Interior. Preservation Brief 25: *The Preservation of Historic Signs*.
<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/25-signs.htm#signage>

U.S. Dept. of the Interior. Preservation Brief 44: *The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings, Repair, Replacement and New Design*. <http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/44-awnings.htm#new-awnings>